

The Nature of Biblical Sanctification in the Life of a Believer

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Introduction

The doctrine of sanctification is vital to the body of Christian theology, yet it is a subject that is greatly misunderstood by many in the Church. There are those in the Christian Church that see sanctification as Pie-in-the-sky, completely unattainable to anyone. They consider it impossible to walk in holiness. Others have a problem with it because it sounds very much like a 'works gospel', and indeed this is the charge generally levelled at promoters of sanctification by those of some denominations. In answering these and other objections it will be clear that, far from sanctification being based upon works, personal holiness is part of God's gracious will for every Christian believer. Sinners saved by grace, yes, but it is God's grace that draws us ever nearer the Lord and Saviour who redeemed us.

Misunderstanding of the doctrine of sanctification ranges from wilful ignorance to misrepresentation of the facts. It has either been downplayed or exaggerated in some camps. One question this paper will answer is, "Is sanctification imputed instantly at conversion or is it a lifelong process?" It is therefore important that we do not approach the subject from a traditional or denominational starting point, nor can we base our

beliefs upon any preconceived ideas or the teachings of men, otherwise it is likely that we will gravitate towards one extreme or another. With an open Bible the student of Scripture should search for all possible light on this or any subject. Only honest investigation will bring us to our goal; then we will at least have a foundational knowledge of the issue.

Before we attempt to find out what the Holy Scriptures actually say concerning Biblical Sanctification and how it relates to everyday Christian experience, it is important that we understand what the various traditions (Wesleyan, Reformed, Charismatic, and Mystic) teach on the subject. The aim of this paper is not to argue against or promote any particular view. For most people interested in sanctification it is the outworking of personal holiness rather than the theological differences between the groups that is the main concern of their lives. Basically, as believers endeavouring to live up to the commitment made to Christ, we want to know how we can please God and walk victoriously instead of being beaten down continually by sin and temptation. A study of Biblical Sanctification will enable us to find practical answers to what it is, how it works, and how it can be translated into daily life in the twenty-first century.

Since there are no surplus words, terms, doctrines or teachings in Scripture, we must assume that Biblical Sanctification is an important element in the Christian life. It should be noted that this paper is not written to balance the differing theories, though there is an element of truth in all of them, since ‘balance’ sounds too much like compromise or spiritual correctness. It is therefore my concern to present Biblical Sanctification in a way that even the newly born child of God can understand. To come to the real and practical meaning of sanctification it is needful to emphasis and re-emphasis certain points. Therefore, each chapter will build upon the foundation laid down in the previous one.

Chapter 1

Models of Sanctification

“All things are possible to him that can in Jesu’s name believe;
Lord, I no more Thy name blaspheme, Thy truth I lovingly receive.
I can, I do believe in Thee; all things are possible to me.

In this chapter we are going to present four models of sanctification. Whilst there is some overlapping of the beliefs between the various traditions (i.e. there is a certain amount of mysticism to be found amongst both Wesleyan and Charismatic theologians) the object here is to present each model briefly and simply, without argument or explanation. There is not enough room to investigate the positive and negative points of each model of sanctification. It should be noted that these models do not form the foundation for the chapters that follow.

The Wesleyan Model of Sanctification

Much of contemporary Evangelicalism is indebted in some way to John Wesley and his theological understanding of Sanctification. Wesleyanism, various varieties of Holiness Theologies, Keswick, Deeper Life, Higher life, Victorious Life Theologies all have their root in Wesley's teaching concerning the Christian life.

John Wesley's ideal for the Christian was to be made perfect in this life. He considered the notion that perfection could not be attained in this life (or only attainable at death) to be a false doctrine: "Do you believe we are sanctified by faith? Be true then to your principle; and look for this blessing just as you are, neither better or worse; as a poor sinner that has nothing to pay, nothing to plead, but 'Christ died.' And if you look for it as you are, then expect it now." Scripture is thus interpreted along this line, since there are many proof texts that appear to support the Wesleyan model of sanctification.

Holiness is a process that begins at the New Birth and continues until it becomes Entire Sanctification. It is this that must be in place in order for the believer to be prepared to meet Christ at death or at His Second Coming. As one grows in love for Christ and others he becomes more sanctified, that is, sanctification is evidenced by great love; "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18). Therefore, sanctification becomes a practical rather than merely a theological or legal issue under Methodism.

Wesley termed sanctification "Christian Perfection" and indeed published a book entitled *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*. Those in opposition to him thought that he was teaching sinless perfection, but in fact Wesley did not hold to that theory. In the book mentioned above he writes, "Perhaps the general prejudice against Christian Perfection may chiefly arise from a misapprehension of the nature of it. We willingly allow, and certainly declare, there is no such perfection in this life as implies either a dispensation from doing good, and attending all the ordinances of God; or a freedom from ignorance, mistake, temptation, and a thousand infirmities necessary connected with flesh and blood." The Church of the Nazarene, in their Articles of Faith boldly declare what most Bible theologians believe to be false, "We believe that entire sanctification is that act of God, subsequent to regeneration, by which believers are made free from original sin, or depravity, and brought into a state of entire devotement to God, and the holy obedience of love made perfect. It is wrought by baptism with the Spirit, and comprehends in one experience the cleansing of the heart from sin and the abiding, indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, empowering the believer for life and service. Entire sanctification is provided by the blood of Jesus, is wrought instantaneously by faith, preceded by entire consecration; and to this work and state of grace the Holy Spirit bears witness. This experience is also known by various terms representing its different phases, such as 'Christian perfection,' 'perfect love,' 'heart purity,' 'the baptism with the Holy Spirit,' 'the fullness of the blessing,' and 'Christian holiness.'" This is an almost complete misunderstanding of Biblical Sanctification. It is the very teaching that Wesley wisely avoided and denounced.

This model also holds to the teaching that sanctification is a “Second Blessing” or a “Second Work of Grace”. This is seen as the Baptism in the Spirit as in the book of Acts. Therefore, every believer is in need of a personal Pentecost and a Filling of the Holy Spirit. It is this Second Blessing after conversion that a believer should expect and receive. It should be noted though that John Wesley accepted that sanctification can be instantaneous at conversion, but in practice we all need the atonement of Christ for our daily offences. “But does God work this great work in the soul gradually or instantaneously? Perhaps it may be gradually wrought in some; I mean in this sense, - they do not advert to the particular moment wherein sin ceases to be. But it is infinitely desirable, were it the will of God, that it should be done instantaneously...” As the believer grows in God, grows in grace, he is inwardly cleansed of sin and sinful habits.

Wesleyanism sees sanctification as the circumcision of the heart whereby sin is cut out once and for all from the Christian’s life. As physical circumcision was an outward sign of a Jew, so sanctification is the inward sign of a Christian believer. This means that sanctification is total cleansing from all known sin to enable one to walk blamelessly before God and man. This understanding of sanctification was taken on board and expanded upon (some may say exaggerated) by the various Holiness movements and the Keswick Convention. Though we do not have space to investigate Keswick the following quotation may help us to understand its belief system, “From its earliest days, Keswick stressed the combination of personal surrender to Christ leading to the fulness of the Holy Spirit, and a process of growth in godliness. It was not unusual to have on the same platform at Keswick advocates of a crisis of sanctification, who would actively encourage hearers to experience the crisis there and then ...”

This model of sanctification usually comes at a certain point subsequent to salvation. It is a lifelong experience of dealing with sin that must result in complete holiness before death or the Coming of the Lord.

The Reformed Model of Sanctification

To the Reformed theologian sanctification is based upon the finished work of Christ upon the cross and man’s union with Him. They see the Lord Jesus Christ as the one who creates sanctification in the believer’s life. This means that He has won sanctification for those elected to salvation and so He imparts it to them when they receive Him. “They who are effectively called and regenerated, having a new heart and a new spirit created in them, are further sanctified really and personally, through the virtue of Christ’s death and resurrection”.

Therefore, sanctification comes by faith in Christ’s death, for if a believer is united to Him because of His death, then it follows that he must receive sanctification from Him also. By this union with Christ we share in His resources, and as such He becomes our sanctification, “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30). John Calvin taught that everything to do with our salvation is to be found and completed in Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, “Grace is itself the power and action of the Spirit: through grace the Father, in the Son, accomplishes whatever good there is; through grace He justifies,

sanctifies, and cleanses us, calls us to Himself, that we might attain salvation.” It becomes the ministry of the Holy Spirit to bring a person into union with Christ. This requires faith on our part, that is, we must believe into Christ to receive cleansing and other benefits.

In the Reformed model justification, sanctification, and regeneration are all performed instantly when a person comes to Christ. This position teaches that justification and sanctification cannot be divided. This implies that since a believer is dead in Christ and dead to sin, then sanctification has automatically been imparted to him without any act or will on his part. Simply stated, the model promotes the idea that being dead to sin and alive to God is indeed sanctification.

While some Reformed theologians and denominations see the sinner being justified upon accepting Christ, most acknowledge a double application of justification and sanctification, i.e. justification being the foundation for sanctification. Under Reformation Theology sanctification is not based upon man’s ability to be holy through exercising his will, nor is it man’s co-operation with God, but on what God has already accomplished in Christ alone. Such holiness is outside of and beyond man, therefore he needs the direct intervention of God before he can be cleansed from sin.

From this position, that is union with Christ, a Christian is able to resist and fight against sin in his life - often termed ‘mortification’. Sanctification, as an ongoing Christian experience, is said to come by obedience to the word of God, afflictions and trials, fellowship with other believers, and through partaking of the sacraments (communion and baptism). In brief, the Reformed model of sanctification teaches that holiness is created, implemented, imparted, and finished in man upon conversion, it is completely the work of the Sovereign God without any assistance by man. Sanctification is therefore a work of grace in salvation.

The Charismatic Model of Sanctification

The Pentecostal and Charismatic understanding of sanctification is usually built around the teachings of mainstream Protestant theology. At times it relies upon Reformation Theology, at other times it holds to Wesleyan (Keswick) Theology. “The Pentecostal Movement owes its inspiration and formation to the Wesleyan Holiness revival of the nineteenth century”. There is also an element of Mystic Theology within certain denominations that come under the Pentecostal and Charismatic label. In reality, it is fair to say that Pentecostalism is a mixture of all three theological positions, adopting some but built upon neither. Both Pentecostal and Charismatics hold certain beliefs in common, but it is recognised that there is a difference between Classic Pentecostalism and the modern Charismatic Movements. Classic Pentecostalism normally does not hold to the theory that the Baptism in the Spirit compares with sanctification, “The oldest form of classical Pentecostalism, what can be called a Wesleyan variety, clung steadfastly to its established notion of sanctification as a ‘second definite work’ - a post-conversional, cleansing experience that enhanced personal holiness and, according to some, radically removed the bent to sin.” Nevertheless there are some denominations that do just that. Therefore in this model we are referring to modern Pentecostal and Charismatic theology.

Sanctification is used in terms of “being spiritual” and usually relates to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Such spirituality sets the person apart, not only from nominal Christianity but also from worldliness. Therefore it is seen as personal piety - practical holiness in an obedient life. This inevitably requires the need for personal experience, so without the Baptism in the Spirit a Christian cannot live a spiritual life - or cannot walk in sanctification. In this model sanctification becomes a part of being Baptised in the Spirit, though some call it being Filled with the Spirit on a daily basis.

As mentioned above, the various Holiness movements evolved from Wesleyan Theology. Holiness becomes a stricter concept within some Pentecostal denominations, but it should be noted that amongst Charismatics there is less emphasis upon personal holiness. Sanctification as a personal experience includes deep religious and emotional feelings. This is considered to be the sanctifying work of God in that person’s life. It is at such times that the Holy Spirit makes the believer aware of the sinfulness of the heart and his desperate need of higher (and deeper) spirituality. There is great emphasis upon speaking with other tongues as an outward sign of this taking place within the soul. Tongues assist the believer to grow in faith and so become more in tune with God and His cleansing power if they are used regularly.

Because of the mixture of theology with Pentecostalism and the Charismatic Movement it is almost impossible to find that blanket statement that would define their belief on the subject of sanctification. Yet, it is safe to say that within the movements sanctification is seen as a heightened sense of spirituality, emphasised either by personal holiness or the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The Mystic Model of Sanctification

Amongst the mystics (which includes the Roman Catholic Church and Quakers) great emphasis is placed upon what is termed “the interior life”. It is on this level that the mystic understands sanctification. It is as a person contemplates their own lives that God can deal with their sin and thus deliver them.

This model of sanctification is popular amongst ascetics and monastic orders within Christendom. To achieve this some have taken to locking themselves in caves and cells to meditate on the Scriptures and their own unworthiness. This is sometimes called “practicing quietness” or “practicing the presence of God”. Asceticism is part of Catholic theology regarding sanctification. Pope John Paul II writes, “The way of perfection passes by way of the Cross. There is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle. Spiritual progress entails to asceticism and mortification that gradually leads to living in the peace and joy of the Beatitudes.” Therefore God deals with man as silver and gold in a refiners fire. Sanctification may include pain, suffering and persecution. The ascetics welcomed and sought such torment so that they might be more sanctified.

Sanctification comes as a result of religious observances, habits and duties, as well as contemplation and prayer. As one looks within and looks to God he sees his own sinfulness in the light of God’s glorious holiness. This is said to increase a person’s

intimacy with God. As the mystic is made aware of his own sinfulness, confession is made out of a broken heart; this is often termed “the dark night of the soul”. As he opens himself up to God and lets himself go, so the sanctifying work of God can be applied and take effect. The side that acknowledges the holiness of God is called “the knowledge of the divine”. This is what Madame Guyon refers to in her book entitled Union with God, “When you are thusly turned toward God, you find it easy to return there again and again. The longer you continue to turn inward to God, the nearer you are drawn to Him and the more firmly you adhere to Him. Consequently, you are further removed from your more outward and natural man ... so often contrary to God.” In other words, as a person sees God he recognises that self is utterly worthless but that God loves him despite the sin.

The mystic model of sanctification is achieved by totally abandoning self, yielding to God, and walking in deep humility before both God and man in all aspects of daily living.

Chapter 2

The Meaning of Sanctification

“Twas most impossible of all that here sin’s reign in me should cease;
Yet shall it be, I know it shall; Jesus, I trust in Thy faithfulness!
If nothing is too hard for Thee, all things are possible to me.

Here we begin to investigate what the Scriptures teach on the subject of Biblical Sanctification rather than how men or denominations explain it. While we will quote from theologians from both the Reformed and Wesleyan Theologies the emphasis will be upon what the Bible actually says. The quotations of men simply being added to show the common understanding of certain terms and insights.

What does the word Sanctification mean? Two Greek words are used in the New Testament to explain what sanctification is, [1] Hagiasmos, [2] Hagiazo. Both words are similar to hagioi which means ‘saints’. From this we see that sanctification has something to do with the believer living a saintly life. Thus sanctification as used in Scripture means to make holy, to consecrate, to separate from the world, and to be set apart unto God from sin so that the believer can serve Him. This is the work of the Holy Spirit and is necessary if we are to have fellowship with a Holy God.

The foundational truths concerning sanctification are found in the Old Testament, especially in direct relationship to the people of Israel. They were meant to be a sanctified people, that is, they were to keep themselves separate from the other nations around them, “And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (Exodus 19:6). They were to stay away from all that God said would pollute them, “For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth”

(Leviticus 11:44). Vessels, tools, altars, and people were sanctified unto the Lord (set apart for His purposes only). In the New Testament the believer is expected to maintain holiness and sanctification, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

Terminology

Biblical terminology covering sanctification includes: "Unblameable in holiness" (1 Thessalonians 3:13); "Perfecting holiness" (2 Corinthians 7:1); "Servants of righteousness unto holiness" (Romans 6:19); "Dead to sin" (Romans 6:2) and "Overcometh the world" (1 John 5:4) to name but a few. These terms describe the operation of the Spirit of God as He separates us, with our co-operation, from sinfulness and brings us to maturity in Christ, thus enabling us to live a victorious life of dedication to God.

God has made us new creatures in Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17) for this very reason,. For though we are in the world, we are not of the world, but born again to experience a personal relationship with the Almighty (John 17:14). It is through Christ alone that all of our sinful attitudes and actions are put to death, that our character is renewed, making us fit to serve and obey God, so that our lives will bring Him both glory and honour. "We believe the objective of redemption to be not merely that of getting people to heaven but to people the earth with believers who are living holy lives."

The Need

Our need for personal holiness springs from the fact that God is holy, "Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). The verse teaches us that what is true of God must be true of His people also. This lofty principle means that in some way, regardless of our personal misgivings, we must be like Him. Scripture teaches us that no sin or sinner is permitted into Heaven or His presence. Further it suggests that only those who are as holy as He is can stand in His presence. This thought is expressed well by Aeron Morgan, "Do you think it is possible for any person to be at home and happy in Heaven, where a Holy God is going to be eternally celebrated in the glory of His holiness (Revelation 4:8), if they die unholy?"

The Purpose

So we see that Biblical Sanctification means to be set apart. There is a fourfold purpose for this setting apart:

1: We are set apart by God. This is the most obvious fact regarding sanctification. We cannot set ourselves apart nor does the flesh have any desire to do so. It is therefore a direct act of God upon a person who submits himself to His will. "Know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself" (Psalm 4:3).

2: We are set apart for God. Those who study their Bibles will have no difficulty accepting this fact. Unfortunately there are some who set themselves apart for other reasons, this usually involves some religious duty or observance. Unless God sets the person apart for His use alone true Biblical Sanctification is not manifested in that life.

3: We are set apart from sin. Herein lies the chief difficulty with understanding sanctification. There is nothing in Scripture than is difficult to understand, but problems arise when we have difficulty believing it. Few even want to know the true nature of their hearts, for as Jeremiah said, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). Sanctification cannot come unless we are separated from sin by the power of God, but God will not do it until we are conscious of the need; "In order to get a clean heart, a man must know and feel its depravity, acknowledge and deplore it before God, in order to be fully sanctified."

4: We are set apart unto a holy life so that God can use us as He wills. "If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Timothy 2:21). Those who are sanctified desire to be useful to God and avoid all that would defile them before Him.

Twofold Application

By now we should clearly see what being sanctified means. To break it down even further into two useful points, we could say that, separation has a twofold application.

Firstly, it is a separation from all known evil, "Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place ... And they gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, and came, according to the commandment of the king, by the words of the LORD, to cleanse the house of the LORD. And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the LORD, to cleanse it, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the LORD into the court of the house of the LORD. And the Levites took it, to carry it out abroad into the brook Kidron. Now they began on the first day of the first month to sanctify, and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of the LORD: so they sanctified the house of the LORD in eight days; and in the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end. Then they went in to Hezekiah the king, and said, We have cleansed all the house of the LORD, and the altar of burnt offering, with all the vessels thereof, and the showbread table, with all the vessels thereof. " (2 Chronicles 29:5, 15-18). In the New Testament the apostle Paul would describe this as "Abstain from all appearance of evil, And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:22-23). We could call this 'Negative Sanctification - the cleansing from sin.

Secondly, it is a separation unto God. This can be termed 'Positive Sanctification, since God is now in charge of the life that is submitted to His will. "This separation is to be followed daily; the believer seeking to become more and more conformed to Christ. Persons professing to be Christians and not following sanctification will not see the Lord; for they are unreal, and have no divine life" Separation unto God has to include obedience on our part or else it is a concept without any power. J. C. Ryle pointed out this fact very succinctly when he said, "Genuine sanctification will show itself in habitual respect to God's laws, and habitual effort to live in obedience to it as the rule of life."

Other Scriptural words relating to Sanctification

Other words are used within theology to describe Biblical Sanctification. These are in common usage, but it is astounding that few Christians understand what they refer to when they make use of them in prayer or worship.

1: Dedication; “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1). This means that we are to be deeply committed to the Lord. In a sense, to use a common expression, we need to have a one-track mind. No one says that this is easy, but it is vital if we are going to truly be the children of God. “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:15-18). If a person is dedicated to a sport or music then he will follow the prescribed order for his life so that he may achieve his goal. “The fact of the matter is that obedience to the Lord’s commands is the most sane and reasonable life and the one that yields the greatest joy.”

2: Purification: “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure” (1 John 3:3). What a standard of purification! Men are too busy measuring their morality up against others, instead we need to measure the purity of our own hearts alongside the purity found in Christ. It is God’s will that we become pure before we reach death, for this is the reason why Christ came to save us. Yes, it may take a lifetime, but it must be accomplished. “Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14). Please note that good works are for this earth, therefore such purification is available today. It seems that those who are truly sanctified are “peculiar” or special, and extremely useful to God. It must be added that the purification we are referring to can only be accomplished in a heart submitted to God, “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you” (Ezekiel 36:25).

3: Consecration: Again, to use a common expression, this is being sold out to God. Here God transforms our minds from a worldly perspective to that of godliness - the mind of Christ, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5) and “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5). But how does consecration become part of our Christian experience? Romans 12:1-2 gives us the answer to that question, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” The consecrated one is he that lays all on the altar of God’s will.

4: Service: “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe He is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:5-9). We are a people called into the service of and to serve the King of kings and Lord of lords. There is always a purpose for God calling a soul to Himself, therefore there is a reason why He calls us unto sanctification.

We began this chapter asking “What is the meaning of Biblical Sanctification?”. In a short space of time we have come to see that it is total surrender to a holy God. That is, we must surrender our lives to Him, separate from sin, be willing for Him to cleanse us completely through the precious blood of Christ, and be made useful to Him in obedience. Sanctification is living in that personal relationship that God intends for every believer. Unfortunately few of us take up His invitation.

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully” (Psalm 24:3-4).

Chapter 3

The Motivation for Sanctification

*“Though earth and hell the Word gainsay, the Word of God shall never fail;
The Lord can break sin’s iron sway; ‘Tis certain, though impossible.
The thing impossible shall be, all things are possible to me.*

Familiar Concept

The dictionary defines ‘motivation’ as “the reason or reasons one has for acting or behaving in a particular way”, and ‘motivate’ as “stimulate (someone’s) interest in or enthusiasm for doing something”. The concept is a familiar one in the business and industrial world. Almost every company from the local supermarket to the multinational company seek to motivate their employees to greater productivity. Classes, seminars and outward-bound courses are offered for this very reason. There are various reasons why a person is motivated in this area. It may include personal pride, better position, higher salary, or simply self-improvement. For example, the Herzberg Motivation Theory states that there are five basic reasons for human motivation: [1] Achievement, [2] Recognition of achievement, [3] The work itself, [4] Responsibility, [5]

Self-satisfaction. These are termed “satisfiers” that motivate staff to produce better work. Therefore we can readily see that human motivation is nearly always selfish in nature.

There can really only be one reason why a believer would even consider the need for personal holiness. This motivation for sanctification arises out of the fact that he or she loves the Lord with all their heart, soul, and strength (Deuteronomy 6:5). They further understand that “without faith it is impossible to please” God (Hebrews 11:6).

The Call of God

If the believer is in this spiritual position then he will seek to obey the word of God and His call to purity of heart. It is God’s will for every one of His children to walk in holiness, to be guided by heavenly morality, and to know what abundant life really is. Paul writing to the Thessalonians says, “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification ... For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness” (1 Thessalonians 4:3,7). We live in an age where sin is acceptable and even promoted, but that does not give us the liberty to do as we please. As saints of God we are called to live holy in an unholy world. This call of God to holiness means that we cannot lower Biblical standards to accommodate new ideas, trends, and alternative lifestyles. If we accept God’s call to sanctification then we must agree that His is the only way regardless of the society we live in. God does not want us to be corruptible and dying with the world. He wants us to be holy. Therefore sanctification includes a call to be uncompromising.

Our Union with God

Since God is calling His Church to holiness then it follows that our will must be united with His. In this we are co-operating with God in the work of sanctification in our lives. This does not mean that we are on equal terms in the work. We should not forget that our co-operation with God does not in itself cleanse us from sinfulness, such cleansing remains solely in the hands of God Himself. Therefore resisting sin is not sanctification, for if it were then millions of unsaved people through sheer will power would be walking in it. Instead it is submitting to God’s will as He cleanses us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Our part in this work is both passive and active. Passive in that we accept God’s call and allow Him to do as He pleases, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1). It is also active since we are called to put His desires into action, “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Romans 8:13).

According to our will

There are some who reject this view because they see it as undermining God’s Sovereignty. They speak of sanctification as a work of sovereign grace that needs no corresponding submission by man. Firstly, it was never God’s will to create robots. He has given to each man a free will to choose or reject His call upon their lives. How would

it be possible for any one of us to be motivated by God's will if the Lord proceeds to make us holy against our will? Secondly, we have to ask why God does not go all of the way and make all of His children perfect in holiness since He respects no man's person? (Ephesians 6:9).

Because it includes our will then it will always be a struggle, a spiritual battle, as we advance towards Ultimate Sanctification. The apostle Paul understood this struggle very well. In Romans 7:14-25 he writes, "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin". He describes this in terms of a civil war taking place within himself. He knew what was right but continued to gravitate towards the wrong. Luther commenting on these verses said, "The whole man is both spirit and flesh, and contends with himself until he is completely spiritual."

Immediate Sanctification

We now must understand the quality of the motivation that compels us towards sanctification. At this point it is important to note that sanctification is not to be considered to be a slow process whereby a believer forsakes sin little by little. Sanctification is not presented in Scripture as a slow work of God in our lives. Such an idea that it takes a long time is usually an excuse for personal failure and sin. Such an attitude (or teaching) goes against God's call in the first place. A person who chooses to drop his sinful ways gradually has not really heard from God. Simply, he has been convicted of his sin, feels the weight of judgement, but loves his sin so much that he is trying to plea-bargain with God. Only a clean break from sin based upon a decision to follow Christ more exactly is the foundation of Biblical Sanctification. Those who respond to the call with the words, "Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first ..." will receive the rebuke "No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:61-62). Therefore the quality of the motivation is directly related to the quantity of the commitment. If a hundred percent is not given then sanctification cannot become part of the believer's life. This is not to say that a new believer automatically understands what fully submitting to God entails, but the desire and willingness to give God all must be there. This is especially true regarding sanctification. A person who purposes in his heart not to go all of the way can never be used by God.

Eternal Fellowship with God

Another aspect of the question of motivation towards Biblical Sanctification has eternal consequences. Scripture plainly tells us, “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). Holiness is a priority for all believers who desire to reach Heaven. Without it no one can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. There is a false assurance in so many that think that they will go to Heaven despite their sin and because they said a sinner’s prayer some time in history. If Hebrews 12:14 simply means that an unsanctified person cannot have fellowship with God in this life, then does it not follow that it must be true also with regards to the Holy of Holies in Heaven? Revelation 21:27 says that “there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth”. Every Christian believer should desire to both please God and live eternally with Him, but how few there are who love Him enough to go all out! “I maintain that believers are eminently and peculiarly responsible and under a special obligation to live holy lives” said J. C. Ryle. Without the delivering power of the blood of Jesus Christ this battle would be eternally lost and no man would be able to stand before a holy God.

The word sanctify or sanctification appears nearly eleven hundred times in our Bibles. This in itself proves just how vital and necessary it is for every believer. In Scripture, objects, altars, tabernacles, temples, days, and priestly robes were sanctified, set apart for God, but His greatest use of sanctification is achieved when those whom He has created are set apart for Him. God’s greatest delight is when men and women by faith accept His will for personal sanctification.

Chapter 4

The Means of Sanctification

*“All things are possible to God; to Christ, the power of God in man;
To me when I am renewed, in Christ am fully formed again.
And from the reign of sin set free, all things are possible to me.*

Its Source

With regards to the means of sanctification we are referring to its source. Understanding where and from whom it originates will go a long way in helping us ascertain the true nature of Biblical Sanctification in the life of a believer. Let us first state without hesitation that the source of holiness does not originate within any one of us. As sons of Adam we are incapable of producing anything that relates in any way to the holiness that God demands. Therefore there is nothing in the human nature that will give us the power to be sanctified. F. B. Meyer made this plain when he said, “A room or public building may be full of delicious sunlight. But that

sunlight is not the property of the room. It does not belong to it. You cannot congratulate it upon its possession. For when the shadows of evening gather, and curtain the face of the sun, the chamber is as dark as possible. So the human spirit has no holiness apart from God. Holiness is not a perquisite, or property, an attribute to which any of us can claim. It is the indwelling of God's light and glory in us."

This wise observation brings us to our Scripture text found in 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it." God Himself is the source of sanctification and it is He that supplies the means of making it effective in our lives. It is God the Father that ordained that those who come to Christ by faith would be sanctified through Christ. The Church of Jesus Christ was never meant to be a weak, enfeebled, and ugly thing. It was meant to be strong, courageous, and beautiful in Christ. As His bride, the Church was purchased at great expense. "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:25-26). It is then the Holy Spirit's ministry to bring each member of the bride of Christ into a deeper, fuller relationship with both the Father and the Son, "God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:13). As we see the Trinity as the source of the physical creation in the book of Genesis, so too do we recognise that the Godhead is active in the work of sanctification of the believer. If God is the source of all life, then we must agree that He is the source of our sanctification.

We must now answer the question, "What are the means whereby God sanctifies His people?" In other words "How are we sanctified?" We have already indicated above something of the means of this, but now we delve a little deeper into how God actually implements and achieves holiness in our lives.

By the Word of God

Before Biblical Sanctification can be applied there must be evidence of faith in the persons life. Without this foundation it would be entirely vain to cleanse a man. This faith must begin with an acceptance that the word of God is true and faithful. It is then from this position the believer can be set apart or sanctified by the Lord. This is exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ was referring to when He said, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17) also, "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:25-26). Sanctification cannot be accomplished if there is unbelief of God's word, and nor can it be maintained in the lives of those who lay aside the truth. On the basis of divine truth all the rest of our Christian experience is built. We would not know we were unholy except it were by the word of God. It is through the study and practice of the Scriptures that a believer is set apart unto God. As a daily manual of godly living it holds all the instructions needed to walk in holiness. The crucial point here is that the Christian must come daily to God's word so that he can be set apart for that day. It is then through the truth that God points us to the place where we can be cleansed. Long ago, in

the prophets, God promised that such a cleansing would be offered to mankind, “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God. I will also save you from all your uncleannesses” (Ezekiel 36:25-29). Commenting on these verses David Wilkerson writes, “God is making us an ironclad promise: ‘You will be clean, I swear it - free from all filthiness, guilt and shame. You no longer have to live under a black cloud of dread and despair. You no longer have to fear exposure and loss.’” It is the Scripture that points out our sin, motivates us to confess our sin, and reveals the only source of reconciliation. In this sense sanctification puts us firmly on the right path.

Through the Blood of Christ

The word of God points us to Christ as the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). It further teaches us that through the blood shed on Calvary we have both forgiveness and sanctification. “Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate” (Hebrews 13:12). Without Christ we stand condemned by God and are under His wrath. Because of this there is no escaping the judgement that must follow as a result of sin. A penalty had to be paid - but we could not afford to pay. The Lord Jesus Christ, as our Substitute, paid the penalty for us by dying in our place as the perfect sacrifice for sin. Because of this His blood both saves and sanctifies, “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19). Of course it is abundantly true that Jesus died to bring us salvation, but shall we miss out on sanctification and consider it unimportant in our lives? The Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross both to save and to sanctify His people. This is what the Atonement is all about, yet far too often this aspect is given very little consideration. It is the sanctifying power of the blood of Christ that still avails for us, “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). This verse speaks of the continual cleansing still available to the child of God that allows us to have personal and intimate fellowship with God. Such cleansing through the blood is necessary in order to walk in holiness, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). The blood of animals was symbolic of the precious blood of Christ. The shedding of innocent blood in sacrifice brought the worshippers into a covenant relationship with God, or was restored and maintained through the same. The blood of Christ is the “blood of the New Covenant” (Matthew 26:28) which includes sanctification, “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:19-22). Only those who are

unwilling to believe that they are in need of sanctification are beyond the power of the atonement, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). It is the power of the cross first and foremost whereby true cleansing is received. Just as a Christless religion cannot save, so too a crossless Christianity cannot sanctify. Along these lines Dave Hunt writes, “The Cross lays bare for all eternity the awful truth that beneath the polite façade of culture and education the heart of man is ‘deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked’ (Jeremiah 17:9) capable of evil beyond comprehension even against the God who created and loves him and patiently provides for him. Does any man doubt the wickedness of his heart? Let him look at the Cross and recoil in revulsion from that self within.”

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Hebrews 2:9-11). Jesus Christ was set apart unto the Father for the salvation of the world. His perfection is shared with those who accept Him. This perfection includes His holiness. For this reason we declare that we have no holiness of our own but desperately need His! “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God” (Ephesians 2:19).

By yielding to the influence of the Holy Spirit

Those who have a strong inclination towards sanctification desire to yield themselves entirely to God, “For as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness” (Romans 6:19). These have no confidence in the flesh, and certainly do not consider any fleshly means of securing sanctification. Man-made methods of holiness or trying to gain purity through good works are doomed to failure right at the start. Man cannot choose his own religion or even a particular time in life to come to God. Instead he must respond to the influence of the Holy Spirit. God does not give the slightest acknowledgement to those who use ascetic methods to be cleansed. With his usual wit Vance Havner said, “The old mystics tried to make themselves holier by hiding from society, but living in a hole does not make you holier!”

The person that does respond to God’s call to holiness will find that the Holy Spirit will move upon him. He will apply the power of the blood of Christ and thus cleanse and purify. Speaking to those who have been saved the apostle Paul writes, “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11). We will look at the timing of sanctification in the next chapter, but it is worth considering the sequence that the Holy Spirit follows, i.e. Washed - Sanctified - Justified. It is for this reason He is called “the Spirit of holiness” (Romans 1:4). It is for the same reason Peter calls believers, “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through

sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:2). The person must decide immediately that he or she is going to live a life totally different to that which they have been living up until that point. Obedience is a vital part of Biblical Sanctification.

By Co-operating with God

A part of the means of Biblical Sanctification involves our will. God does not force us to be holy, but expects us to co-operate with Him as He lays the desire upon our hearts. To quote from 2 Corinthians 7:1 again, we read, “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”. It therefore becomes our responsibility to perfect holiness in the fear of God. There are two points that need to be made here. Notice that Paul says that we must “cleanse ourselves”, thereby acknowledging our part in the process of sanctification. What the advocates of the Sovereignty of God fail to understand, is that, by His sovereign will God has chosen to give man a free will to choose either to serve Him or reject Him. This in no way undermines His authority. The second point is regarding the fear of God. If believers feared the Lord more then there would be a better spiritual condition found within our churches. The Paul exclaims, “There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Romans 3:18). Who today even considers it “a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:13)? David Wilkerson expressed it this way, “When the fear of God has fully laid hold of you, you’ll dread the danger and consequences of sin. You’ll have the power of godly fear at work in you. And you’ll walk every day in this holy fear.” What is it going to take on our part? We are going to have to seek out sin in our lives, the sins that so easily beset us (Hebrews 12:1) are usually very visible and on the surface. The Lord wants to deal with them and those that are hidden in the dark corners of our lives. Then we must judge those sins the way God does. A spade is a spade even if someone else calls it a shovel. Forget the fanciful modern terminology, God calls it sin. It is an abomination to Him and should be to us. Therefore we are going to have to cast it away from us. None of this will bring the sanctifying power of God into our lives until we go to Him in prayer, asking for cleansing and strength to live a holy life. With David we would cry, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10). This may take much effort on our part, for it requires putting to death that which has been a part of our nature for so long, “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Romans 8:13). In a sense that is the easiest part, the problems occur when we have to go on to living in the Spirit. Jesus said to His disciples, “the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41), but still we must compel ourselves forward in obedience to God’s command which says, “The works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ’s have

crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:19-25).

By chastisement and discipline

There are times when the word of God is simply not getting through to the child of God. In this situation God has no other choice but to chastise, discipline and correct that person. Sometimes we continue headlong in our sinful ways. The sin and flaws in our hearts get bigger and bigger until there is a possibility that we will turn completely away from God. God does not ignore this situation even if we do. He allows personal suffering to bring us to our senses. He corrects us so that we can know something of His divine nature, “For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Hebrews 2:10). He wants His purity, holiness and glory to shine through us. Correction is meant as a wake-up call before it becomes too late. “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Hebrews 12:11). Those who are in son and receive no correction are in great danger, “But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons” (Hebrews 12:8). Therefore we see that God chastises those that belong to Him. He disciplines them so that they might realise how far they have fallen, and then call out to God for cleansing. “The instrument by which the Spirit effects this work is generally the Word of God, though He sometimes uses afflictions and providential visitations without the Word” remarked J. C. Ryle.

Consequences of remaining unsanctified

In this chapter we have seen the tools which God uses to bring His children to sanctification. He as the source of our sanctification has chosen to use these methods since He does not want even one of His own to fall away. As a final thought regarding the issues raised in this section, it would be appropriate to ask, “What happens to those who continue to resist God’s call to sanctification especially taking into account all He has done to draw them to Himself?” In such a situation God is left with no alternative but to give them up until they come to their senses (if they ever do). Paul answers this question very precisely in Hebrews 6:1-6, “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection and this will we do, if God permit. For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame”.

Chapter 5

The Manner of Biblical Sanctification

*“All things are possible to God; to Christ, the power of God in me;
Now shed Thy mighty Self abroad, let me no longer live, but Thee;
Give me this hour in Thee to prove the sweet omnipotence of love.*

Any study on the topic of Biblical Sanctification must investigate the timing of this act of God in a Christian's life. This may appear at first sight to be an unnecessary line to pursue, but when we realise that the various traditions (models of sanctification) have different starting points it becomes obvious that such information is important. For instance, the Reformed model of sanctification describe it as happening immediately upon conversion. For them it is Justification first followed by Sanctification, yet all taking place within a twinkling of an eye. Yet the Wesleyan model reverses the sequence, Sanctification then Justification. They also believe that it can take place instantly upon regeneration but suggest that is more usual for it to occur sometime after, at a crisis point.

What the different denominations teach is important, but most vital of all is to understand what the word of God says about this. If we find it in agreement with elements of the models all well and good, if not, then we are forced to accept what Scripture says rather than men.

The Timing of Sanctification

Regardless which theology we subscribe to, the majority of Bible believing churches describe the believer being “set apart” unto God at conversion. Regeneration is the initial act of God upon a sinner's life. Without it nothing else can be accomplished. The very act of setting apart is Biblical Sanctification. Therefore this cleansing must come first (if even only momentarily) before justification.

A person must be made holy before he can live holy. Initial sanctification is part of the conversion process. Though sanctification is a lifelong experience it must begin somewhere. This is the reason for the term *Initial* sanctification. “If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him ... But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 John 2:29, 1 Peter 1:15-23). When God renews a person he is immediately sanctified and justified, and expected to continue in this new life, but because of the weakness of the flesh the work of

sanctification continues. A simple analogy may help here. A new born baby is immediately washed and placed in its mother's arms. That initial washing does not infer that he does not need to be bathed again. Though he will need a re-application of water and soap many times in his life, he does not need to be born again. In a similar way, just because a believer needs to be sanctified continuously does not mean that he is not an accepted child of God. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Even initial sanctification requires the yielding of self. If the person coming to Christ will not yield himself, that is give God everything, then sanctification cannot be applied. Those who do submit to Him are immediately moved upon by the Holy Spirit. At this time he is transformed into a child of God, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). After which he is to walk in this new life. So we can see that the timing of Biblical Sanctification is both *initial* and *progressive*. It is also evident that sanctification is not imputed as in the case of justification. Imputed justification is a one time event but sanctification is initial yet is progressive. Paul gives us the order in which the Holy Spirit works in a life at conversion, "Ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11).

For the technically minded I offer the following chart as it appears in *Bible Doctrine* by Wayne Gruden:

JUSTIFICATION	SANCTIFICATION
Legal Standing	Internal Condition
Once for all time	Continues throughout life
Entirely God's Work	We Co-operate
Perfect in this Life	Never perfect in this life
The same in all Christians	Greater in some than in others

At the new birth we are made Saints - sanctified ones, "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all ... called to be saints" (Hebrews 10:10, Romans 1:7). This is a transformation from sinner to saint, from unclean to sanctified, from being alienated from God to becoming His child. It is this holiness that must begin at conversion. J. C. Ryle commenting on salvation remarked, "The faith which has not a sanctifying influence on the character is no better than the faith of devils ... In a word, where there is no sanctification there is no regeneration, and where there is no holy life there is no new birth".

Sanctification is not the Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Sanctification should not be considered as being the same as the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Such a view is very similar to the Greek Orthodox Church's teaching that infant baptism sanctifies the child. They consider this ritual as having some legal authority in the eyes of God and is thus spiritual in nature. Biblical Sanctification is moral since it affects both the human nature and character of the person who comes to Christ by faith. Just as water cannot change the human nature so neither can the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (which is very evident as one reads the book of Acts). Many amongst the Wesleyan and Methodist camp see sanctification as the Second Blessing. This is simply not the case. The theory comes from a misunderstanding of what happened on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the one hundred and twenty in the upper room. There is no mention of sanctification and neither does the event reflect such a thing. Most Pentecostals speak of the Baptism in the Spirit as being the Second Blessing apart from sanctification. Those in the extreme of Pentecostalism (especially the Charismatic and Renewal groups) argue that the Gift of Tongues is evidence of the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. Since there is absolutely no Scriptural evidence to support this we must pronounce it as being a heresy and unworthy of honest discussion.

Scripture does not suggest that Biblical Sanctification is the Second Blessing. It is nearly always described as being an ongoing work in a believer's life. It is being irresponsible to call sanctification either the Second Blessing or the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. The Baptism in the Spirit does not and cannot cleanse a person from his sin, such cleansing in on the basis of Christ's finished work on the Cross.

Delivered from the Penalty of Sin

At sanctification God delivers us from the penalty of sin [see chapter 4, *'Through the Blood'* for discussion on the penalty of sin], this is why He can justify us. Sanctification, simply put, wipes the slate clean and justification gives us the liberty to walk free. A person cannot be declared clean until he has been cleansed. We need to remind ourselves that we are not discussing the false theory of Sinless Perfection. John Wesley stated, "*Sinless Perfection* is a phrase I never use." This must be our understanding also. There are too many in the Christian Church who claim Sinless Perfection and consider themselves amongst the spiritual elite. For example, "Since January 1, 1998, I have had the power not to sin. I testify today unequivocally that it does exist, because I HAVE IT. If you do not know beyond a shadow of a doubt when the crisis moment occurred that radically changed your heart and life, it has not occurred. If you are envious of me with this relationship, and desire to get it, you should, because IT IS WONDERFUL ... In answer to the question 'What should I do to sin no more?' - You must be filled with the Holy Spirit ... God is purifying and developing the Bride of Christ through the Gifts of the Spirit". [Please see Chapter 1 for details regarding Entire Sanctification and Sinless Perfection]. The apostle John would say to such people, "If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 1:10-2:2). Far from Sinless Perfection being described in Scripture, we find that it presents the need of personal

righteousness in a fallen world. A person who has been sanctified seeks to keep his Christian character pure before God and the world, “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:15). Paul tells us that we must walk in sanctification because God wants “to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight” (Colossians 1:22). A true believer has been crucified with Christ, so by God’s grace keeps free from the power and dominion of sin, “Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness” (Romans 6:18), therefore such a person finds victory over the flesh in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Delivered from the Power of Sin

The word of God is like a mirror that reveals just how sinful we are, “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (James 1:22-25). Though not agreeing with the position he puts sanctification in Ironside makes a good point when he writes, “The incorrigibility of the flesh must be realised before one is ready to turn altogether from self to Christ for sanctification, as He has already done for justification.” As the Holy Spirit reveals sin, it needs to be confessed to God, and so cleansing is received. Those who do not want to know what their hearts are really like will of course neglect to read and study their Bibles. Its power of conviction being too great for them to bear. But those who do, and respond to what they see, will be blessed with sanctification. Deliverance from sin’s power is both immediate in that the Lord gives one the authority to be an overcomer, and progressive, for there is a steady growth towards maturity and holiness. “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18). As we see Jesus in all of His holiness revealed in the Scriptures we will want to cry out with Peter, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8). Each spiritual battle that the believer faces will make him more victorious over sin. Nevertheless, this only comes as he surrenders to the Lord.

What the believer must recognise is that his body is the temple of God on earth, “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?” (1 Corinthians 6:19). As the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit we can readily see why the temple needs to be pure (or purified). All defilement and impurity must be removed before a person can truly be useful to God. The temple (body) can become defiled through immoral thoughts, desires, deeds, films, books, or companions. There is no place within the temple for wickedness of any kind, “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

This is the reason why we need to be delivered from the power of sin” (2 Corinthians 6:16-18).

God’s plan and purpose has always been to have a sanctified people. He has never changed His mind over this regardless of the acceptability of sin and immorality in today’s world. Paul, in Ephesians 1:4, writes, “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love”. Everything He is doing in us and for us is to bring us to purification and sanctification. The progressive nature of this is revealed in Ephesians 2:21, “In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord”. This thought is continued by the apostle Peter, “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ ... But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:5,9).

This deliverance from sin demands our active participation. As we gain the victory over sin, temptation and the flesh so the work of sanctification moves ever forward towards the goal - full maturity in Christ - Christlikeness. Sin, faults and mistakes do manifest themselves all along the way, but they do not mean that there is no desire to be holy in our hearts. In fact, it is the Holy Spirit who will highlight these areas so that they can be dealt with and so make us even more useful to God. The same Holy Spirit is active in our lives in bringing us into conformity to the image of Christ. Therefore because we fall into sin it does not follow that we have never received Initial Sanctification. If that were the case we would not and could not even be born again. It is helpful to remember that Adam and Eve were perfect and sinless before they fell. It is vital that we do something about the sin the Holy Spirit highlights in our lives. God will not do it without our co-operation. “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

Delivered from the Presence of Sin

One day we will be ultimately and completely separated from the presence of sin. We will be made as holy as God has determined to make us. This is our goal, the determination of our hearts, and the fulfilment of God’s will for us. “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23). If this is not the vision of a believer then it is likely that he has never really yielded his life to the Lord.

What Paul is speaking about in the above verse relates to the fact that our final (entire) sanctification will come about at that moment our bodies are changed at the return of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 15:52-55 we read, “In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on and this mortal shall have

put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”. While it may be possible to live in holiness in spirit and soul, while our bodies of flesh are on this earth we cannot be “wholly” sanctified. Some have expressed the progressive nature of sanctification (and indeed salvation) in this way: We have been sanctified in our spirit so that we can have fellowship with God; We are being sanctified in our soul, that is our minds are daily being renewed; We will be sanctified when we are changed in the presence of Christ. This is how the apostle John describes the event, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2), but he did not leave it there, he added, “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (:3). From the point of view of the moral weakness of the flesh, every believe will be imperfect until the Lord comes again. Those who are dead in Christ are not whole until they are reunited with their bodies at His coming, “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Even the apostle Paul knew that he had not attained the perfection that the Lord had purposed for His children. He writes in Philippians 3:12-13, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

In this chapter we have seen something of the manner or timing of Biblical Sanctification. The Scriptures describe it in three ways; Initial, Progressive, and Ultimate. Each one of these elements are vital if sanctification is going to be a personal experience. It is not enough to claim to be saved from sin if there is no evidence of cleansing in our lives.

Chapter 6

The Merits of Sanctification

“All Thy works shall praise Thee, O LORD; and Thy saints shall bless Thee”

Psalm 145:10

Biblical Sanctification has its rewards both earthly and eternal. In this chapter we will look at what the Lord has in store for those who live according to His will. The merits of sanctification are available to those who are walking in the high way of God, “This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left” (Isaiah 30:21).

Perfection through Christ

The apostle Paul, writing to the Hebrews, said, “For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (10:14). The cross brings the Christian the greatest benefit possible (i.e. perfect salvation), but it is only available to those who have received initial sanctification and are going forward to ultimate sanctification. It is of interest that the word ‘sanctified’ here is in the present participle, which emphasizes the continuous action in the present. This is what Paul was referring to also in Hebrews 7:25, “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.” Our salvation cannot be improved upon, but the work of sanctification, started at that time, grows with each step along the spiritual road. As believers we can claim Perfect Salvation with “full assurance” (Hebrews 7:22), though we need the continued power of sanctification in our lives.

“Now let me gain perfection’s height,
Now let me into nothing fall!
Be less than nothing in my sight
And feel that Christ is all in all.”

The Fruit of Holiness

The cleansing that has come to us through Christ creates fertile soil for the seed of sanctification. It may be helpful to see initial sanctification as a seed (deposit) planted in our lives at conversion. It is not meant to lie dormant but instead is to go on to produce fruit. The fruit (evidence of Biblical Christianity) in our lives is holiness. Without such holiness we are left with barren hypocrisy. Sanctification has to grow to be effective. The seed is useless if it does not begin to produce more of its own kind. Therefore sanctification produces holiness. We are guaranteed that it will if we follow the Lord and His word, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6). We are therefore partakers of God’s holiness since we do not possess any of our own. “The most powerful evidence of God’s supernatural work in our lives is found in the transfiguration of our character to Christlikeness.”

God’s Presence

When God’s people are sanctified He manifests His glorious presence in them. During Israel’s exodus from Egypt and during their travels through the Wilderness for forty years, the presence of God was there guiding by day and night (Exodus 3:5). This is symbolic of His continued presence with us today. He promises in His word, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5). Without His presence it would be absolutely impossible to live the Christian life or walk in sanctification. It should be noted that God does not live in defiled temples, nor does He abide what is unholy, “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal” (Habakkuk 1:13).

We shall see Him

The joy of every believer is the knowledge that one day we will see the Lord in all of His glory. Each one awaits to hear those words of commendation, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matthew 25:21). Holiness is absolutely essential if we are going to see Him for without holiness “no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14), but the Lord has promised that the “pure in heart” will see Him (Matthew 5:8). It is not the rewards of faithful living that will impress us the most, but the awesome reality of standing in the presence of the King of kings and Lord of lords. As someone said, “Heaven won’t be Heaven unless Jesus is there!”

We shall stand before Him unblameable

This seems in our present position to be almost an impossibility. How can sinners such as we stand blameless before a Holy God? Yet this is exactly what Scriptures teaches us, “to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight ... To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints” (Colossians 1:22, 1 Thessalonians 3:13). The presenting of the believer perfect before God is the final acts of Biblical Sanctification. The word unblameable (amomous) means to be without blemish and faultless; unproveable (anegkletus) means to be beyond reproach. What Paul is driving at here is the fact that God will be pleased with us. Nevertheless let us remember that Ultimate Sanctification is only possible because of Initial and Progressive Sanctification. This is why Paul states in Colossians 1:23, “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel”.

Chapter 7

Maintaining Sanctification

“Be ye holy; for I am holy”
1 Peter 1:16

God has made provision every believer with the means of maintaining holiness in his life. There is absolutely no Scriptural or reasonable excuse for not walking in sanctification. Let us remind ourselves at this point what we are discussing. There are those who teach that sanctification is a single act of God’s grace in a believer’s life at conversion. Others say that it is a second work of grace at an unspecified time after conversion. Biblical Sanctification teaches that there is an Initial, Progressive, and Ultimate sanctification at work in our lives. It should not be limited to one, two or three blessings, rather it is an ongoing work of God’s grace. To limit it would make it both stagnant and ineffective. It is far better to see sanctification as developing in a Christian’s life. With that said, we must ask:

What is our Response?

Every born again child of God must realise the desperate need of personal holiness. It is a subject that cannot be brushed under the carpet, neglected, or explained away. When we consider it in the light of God's word we see the reality of our own nature. This should motivate us to do something about what we see. God demands a response from us. Peter writes, "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:14-16). Those who desire to live according to the principle of sanctification know that they cannot live their lives the same way as the world does, instead their aim is to live by godly principles. They know that "God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness" (1 Thessalonians 4:7).

This knowing is actually the knowledge of God's will made manifest in our hearts through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. In actual fact, sanctification does not really get off the ground until one acknowledges that it is God's will, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1 Thessalonians 4:3). John Wesley asks, "What is it to be sanctified?" and the response is, "To be renewed in the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness." If it is God's will then we must respond positively to it rather than trying to see what we can get away with. Adam Clarke described this when he wrote, "Many preachers, and multitudes of professing people, are studious to find out how many imperfections and infidelities, and how much inward sinfulness, are consistent with a safe state in religion; but how few, very few, are bringing out the fair gospel standard to try the height of the members of the church; whether they be fit for the heavenly army; whether their stature be such as qualifies them for the rank of the Church militant! "the measure of the stature of the fulness" is seldom seen; the measure of the stature of the littleness, dwarfishness, and emptiness, is often exhibited."

From this acknowledgement of Biblical Sanctification being the will of God for all believers, the next step is to realise that it is God Himself working in our lives rather than it being merely an operation of the will, "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12-13). This admonition from the apostle Paul teaches us that obedience is vital on our part, but also that it is God who makes us aware of the need and gives us the means whereby we can perform His will.

A form of holiness may be achieved through personal effort and will power, or by some religious observance, but it still would not be Biblical Sanctification. The truly sanctified believer does not rely upon good works but stays in an intimate fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me" (John 15:4). Those living in sanctification have devoted themselves to prayer, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2), desire to obey God's Word, "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth" (John 17:17), and are sensitive to the will and leadings of God. Those living and walking in sanctification love God's ways but hate

everything to do with evil, “Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity” (Hebrews 1:9). Even in the smallest details of their lives they desire to be obedient to the Lord.

The Believer’s position in Christ

This area is sometimes neglected when the topic of sanctification is being studied, but where we stand in Christ is the foundation on which holiness can perform its work. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death? ... Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him ... Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Romans 6:3,9,16). This is what we need to know: a) That we are dead in Christ; b) The power of death has no hold on Christ; c) We are therefore alive in Him; d) The ways of death should no longer be controlling the Christian. Paul puts this extremely well in Galatians 2:20, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me”. A part of maintaining holiness is understanding that in Christ we have all the resources necessary for overcoming self, sin, and Satan.

These resources, and indeed the power of sanctification itself, are appropriated by faith in Christ. Scriptures teaches us that “without faith it is impossible to please” God (Hebrews 11:6). Therefore faith is required for sanctification in its progressive nature also. When explaining to King Agrippa what the Lord had spoken regarding his ministry, the apostle Paul said, “To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me” (Acts 26:18).

Christlikeness

Our aim should be to be as much like Christ as possible while God works into our hearts both His grace and provisions necessary for such a thing to be accomplished. Satan would question this by whispering in our ears, “You are aiming too high!” If we are called to be Christlike then we cannot aim too high; the fact is, the majority of believers do not aim high enough.

What is being suggested here is that we copy the Lord’s example in every aspect of our lives. This was Paul’s method and he believed it ought to be so for all of us, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). Another way of saying this is, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5). Peter said the same thing when he wrote, “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth” (1 Peter 2:21-22). H. A. Ironside said that such Christlikeness should be part of the daily lifestyle of every believer, it is the “power for the new life, and thus practical sanctification day by day”.

We could term such Chrislikeness 'Practical Obedience'. Those who have been sanctified (set apart by and unto God) should be walking in obedience to God's word. There are too many Scripture references to support this, but the following are sufficient to prove the point: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ ... because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth ... Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word ... Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (1 Peter 1:2, 2 Thessalonians 2:13, Psalm 119:9,11). Therefore we must actively obey the voice of the Holy Spirit as He speaks to us through the Scriptures and our conscience, and because of this sanctification should never stop increasing in our lives. This is hard work. God never said it would be easy. Dave Hunt wrote, "The Christian life is too glorious to be easy." We have to agree!

Daily Maintenance

Discipleship calls for daily adherence to the word and will of God. Sanctification is the work of God in the lives of His people, but there must be the corresponding action (or working out of it) in our every day lives, "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12-13). In order for sanctification to be accomplished we must respond to God's call to holiness by separating ourselves from all evil, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Romans 6:1-2) even to the slightest appearance of it, "Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22). The Lord does cleanse us, but in daily practice we must cleanse ourselves, "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1); "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Romans 6:12).

If we really want to walk in Biblical Sanctification then we must set apart (sanctify) a time of our day to both commune with God and study His word. Jesus taught the original twelve to "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41), and it is excellent advice for believers of the twenty-first century. A Christian grows in sanctification through believing and obeying the Bible, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Hebrews 4:12-13). By daily applying it to their lives it has a purifying effect on their hearts and minds.

As followers of Christ there will be times when we will fail Him by giving in to the flesh. Instead of pulling further away from Him we should go to God in repentance, pleading

for the sanctifying, cleansing power of the blood of Christ, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). This does not negate the need to resist all temptation that comes along. Let’s not forget that God always gives us an escape route from sin and temptation, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13). The apostle James encourages us to “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). In times of failure it is easy to get discouraged, exactly what the Devil wants, but we should cling even more to Him that saved us. “Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins,
And sinners plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilt and stains.

E’er since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.”

If there is a longing in our hearts for true holiness then there is a holy God ready to supply what we need, “My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). Sanctification, purity, Christlikeness, it is there awaiting the child of God who is determined to live holy in an unholy world. Jesus has paid the price for our sanctification, all that is now required is our obedience.

Chapter 8

Ministerial Sanctification

“This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work”
1 Timothy 3:1

From time to time the Church world is rocked by some scandal or another. This usually involves immorality or financial irregularity amongst the leadership. These scandals bring the Church into the media’s spotlight for all the wrong reasons, and thus Christianity receives the ridicule of the world. In recent years we have seen the impropriety of some American Television Evangelists highlights the corruption that exists within the Church (it should be noted that all denominations have had their share of scandal and that it does not just exist in the Pentecostal and Charismatic circles). No wonder the common objection on the lips of the unsaved is, “The Church is full of hypocrites!”

Purity of Leadership

Especially amongst Bible-believing evangelicals there ought to be purity and holiness, from the leadership down through each member of the local church. Charles Spurgeon commenting on this subject writes, “No amount of fees paid to learned doctors, and no amount of classics received in return, appear to us to be evidences of a call from above. True and genuine piety is necessary as the first indispensable requisite; whatever ‘call’ a man may profess to have, if he has not been called to holiness, he certainly has not been called to the ministry.”

If the leadership is corrupt then it is likely that those who remain in the congregation will be stained with the same sin. A church where the pastor frequents pubs and clubs, and is involved in other questionable pursuits, will find its membership following the same example. The minister of the Gospel should set the example for his congregation in godly living and holiness. This is why we have titled this chapter ‘Ministerial Sanctification’. Holiness right at the top is an absolute and is demanded by a Holy God. “God is only demanding what is perfectly consistent with His character, and cannot demand anything that is inconsistent with His character ... It is an inescapable demand because its written in the character of God.” Such sanctification is twofold in nature:

- a) The minister of the church should be ‘set apart’ unto God for the task that God has called him to. Being set apart he is therefore sanctified, that is, holy unto the Lord.
- b) His lifestyle outside of the pulpit must reflect God’s holiness. The eyes of the congregation and of the world are upon him. Godliness must be manifested in his every day life.

Richard Baxter advises ministers, “Take heed to yourselves lest your example contradict your doctrine, and lest you lay such stumbling blocks before the blind as may be the occasion of their ruin; lest you unsay with your lives what you say with your tongues.” Therefore the leader of the church has been given the highest possible rank among men, “This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work” (1 Timothy 3:1) or as Charles Spurgeon said, “He is not to be content with being equal to the rank and file of Christians, he must be a mature and advanced believer.” This is the very area where Satan will seek to destroy first. The Lord Jesus Christ, speaking with regards to His crucifixion, told His disciples, “Smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad” (Matthew 26:31), this is also true regarding the leader of a church. Again Richard Baxter put this very clearly when he described Satan’s attack on the ministry, “As he hateth Christ more than any of us, because He is the General of the field and the Captain of our salvation, and doth more than all the world besides against the kingdom of darkness; so doth he hate the leaders under Him more than the common soldiers: he knows what a rout he will make among the rest if the leaders fall before their eyes.” It is of vital importance that those in ministry conform to the standards laid down in the word of God.

Biblical Standards of Conduct

Ministerial Sanctification means that Biblical standards must be evident both spiritually and morally within the leadership. This is more important than having a likeable personality, administration skills, or preaching gifts. God expects a high standard of behaviour amongst the shepherds of His flock. Therefore the minister must live by and teach the principles of righteousness. Then he will be a role model of faithfulness, truth, and holiness. In other words his character must reflect the Lord's expectations, "His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:41).

Being an Example

The apostles Paul and Peter taught that those in leadership are to be examples of goodness and holiness within the church. Writing to the young minister Timothy, he says, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Timothy 4:12). Every part of Timothy's life had to conform to God's will, and what was true for him is also true for all who serve the Lord in this way. Peter makes similar comments along this line, "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:3), that is, the pastor must lead by example. Personal purity magnifies his teaching and doctrine, and that holiness must be of the highest level, "He that delights not in holiness ... is not fit to be a pastor of a Church."

People learn not only through the preaching of the Gospel but by example too. If there is no evidence of sanctification in the pastor's life then it is unlikely that they will walk in it themselves. Therefore it is necessary for the minister to set a godly pattern for those that the Lord has placed within his care. A holy example will go a long way to keeping the congregation from error and wickedness, "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)" (Philippians 3:17-19), and will cause them to stand firmly upon the Holy Scriptures, "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:13).

The Lack of Ministerial Sanctification

Purity and holiness should not only exist in the Church but should be abundantly manifested by its leadership. The minister must be "Blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)" (1 Timothy 3:2-5, see also Titus 1:6).

Where there is no sanctification in the leadership of the church, then in God's eyes the minister is disqualified from shepherding the flock. Remarking on the sinfulness of some pastors Richard Baxter states, "Your sins have more hypocrisy in them than other men's." This is because the teacher of the word, if he lives outside of holiness, "shall receive the greater condemnation" (James 3:1). That is God will judge those who claim to uphold godliness on a higher, stricter level.

We must not forget that the leadership of the Church was purchased with the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and requires high spiritual and moral standards. No one in the body of Christ can turn away from God's righteous requirements, nor can the minister of the Gospel live any other way than in daily holiness, for the eyes of the world are upon him. He must exercise himself in holiness, purity, discipline, and sanctity. "You are to exercise yourself in godliness as much as an Olympic athlete exercises his body. How much energy, effort, time, and dedication does an Olympic athlete put into his training? His sport is his life - unequivocally. So it is with you: godliness is to be your life. All of your energy, effort, time, and dedication are to be given over to godliness."

Chapter 9

A Memorial Account of Personal and National Sanctification

"Hezekiah began to reign when he was five and twenty years old, and he reigned nine and twenty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah. And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done. He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them. And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street, and said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place."
(2 Chronicles 29:1-5)

Throughout Scripture we see numerous accounts of men, women and nations getting right with God. As the convicting power of the Holy Spirit came upon them, as they heard and heeded God's word, they repented. This was true for Nineveh under Jonah, the Jews under the ministry of Ezra and Nehemiah, and Judah under King Josiah. God promised in 2 Chronicles 7:14, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" and He has always been faithful to His promise. The account of the Temple being sanctified during the reign of King Hezekiah shows what can happen when a people submit to God in obedience. Maybe before we pray for revival we need to look long and hard at the need for personal sanctification.

The Temple Cleansed

If we want our lives to be revived and refreshed then there are certain measures that we are going to have to implement.

First of all we must deal with whatever sin there is in our lives. Don't try to excuse it. All sin is filthiness in the sight of God. Don't dare say, "God knows I'm only human". The priests in Hezekiah's day were only human too, but they had to sanctify themselves and cleanse the temple before God would dwell in it again. Deal with sin by confessing it to the Lord, "For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me" (Psalm 51:3). Andrew Murray writes, "We know what holiness is. God alone is holy, and holiness is that which God communicates of Himself. Separation and cleansing and consecration are not holiness, but only the preliminary steps on the way to it. The temple was holy because God dwelt in it."

After confession of sin comes the actual cleansing of the temple. Did you notice that the priests had to sanctify themselves before they could go in to sanctify the temple and take out all the filth? Many try to cleanse the church before they cleanse themselves. Unholy hands cannot revive a dead church - do you not wash your hands before you wash your face? It is better that you get rid of all that offends the Lord before He come to cleanse you in His anger. "And they come to Jerusalem: and Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. And He taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Mark 11:15-17). The Lord refused to dwell in defiled temples in the Old Testament, nor Jesus' day, neither will He do so today. "ICHABOD" [the glory is departed] (1 Samuel 4:21) is written in large letters over many a church today because of the filthiness found inside. The moneychangers and dove sellers are now behind the pulpits teaching the people of God how to be rich like themselves.

Who gets rid of the filthiness in the temple? Those who sanctify themselves (i.e. those who get right with God). What right have we to do this? Did not the religious leaders say this to Jesus also? We have every right if "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up" (John 2:17). It is not being judgmental or legalistic, it's desiring to see the glory of the Lord returning to His Church. Those who are concerned enough about the filth will do something about it.

The Church needs it

"Sanctification was reality for Israel. Without it, there could have been no covenant, no priest, no sanctuary. And it is likewise a reality with us, and just as necessary."

As individuals and as a Church we are the temple of God. The temple in Jerusalem, especially the Holy of Holies, played a very important role in the worship of God, but now there is something even more precious and hallowed than that. The body of a believer becomes the temple of God at conversion, and as such it is meant to be holy. We need to catch the significance of this, that is, our bodies actually replace the Inner

Sanctuary (the Holy of Holies) of the temple. This is why Scripture calls Christians *saints* or 'holy ones'. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate [sanctified], saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing [don't practice filthiness]; and I will receive you" (2 Corinthians 6:14-17). God expects us to deal with the filthiness. There are those will believe that we must leave the entire work of sanctification up to the Lord. This is foolish and unwarranted in scripture. Hezekiah did not believe that and nor did the apostle Paul who said in 2 Corinthians 7:1 (right after the text above), "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

The Living God will not live in filthiness, uncleanness and sin. Instead He will purposely seek to destroy those who continue in defilement though He has often called them to repentance. We might not like to hear this, but it is true. I'm just repeating what the apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:16; "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple are ye." These verses should be applied both personally and then collectively. It is plainly stated that God will destroy defiled temples. This is in exactly what He would have done if the priests had not sanctified themselves and the temple when Hezekiah told them to; "For our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD our God, and have forsaken Him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD, and turned their backs. Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy place unto the God of Israel. Wherefore the wrath of the LORD was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and He hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes. For, lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and daughters and our wives are in captivity for this" (2 Chronicles 29:6-9).

When should it be done?

When should we sanctify ourselves? Tomorrow? When we feel the move of the Spirit? No, it has to be now. Any later than this and we will miss it. We must sanctify ourselves by getting rid of the filth from our lives immediately. "But, dear reader, if you live unto yourself, unto pleasure, and unto the world - then you are not perfected in Christ. And what will become of you?" Once we have confessed our personal sins, then we must immediately cleanse the temple [Church] of all filthiness, questionable activities, modernism, liberalism, any anything else that is not in accordance with Scripture. Why do I say it has to be done immediately? For two reasons: Firstly, leave it for a moment longer and the devil will give you a a thousand and one reasons why you can do it later. Secondly, God tells us to do it immediately, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another,

while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3:12-13). Do you know that the priests sanctified themselves and the temple immediately? “And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was done suddenly [quickly, immediately]” (2 Chronicles 29:36).

We need to do something about our ‘spiritual house’ in the light of what we have read. It is too serious a matter to put it off until another time. We need the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and in the Church, but it must start with the priests [us] cleansing their own hands first.

Conclusion

Sanctification must not be accepted merely as God’s act of justifying a person from the penalty of his sin at the new birth. We already have an adequate term for that - justification. While justification has an element of sanctification in it, it does not describe what the Bible means by the word sanctification. Sanctification is an ongoing personal experience in a believer’s life which starts at conversion.

The believer is progressively sanctified through Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as he or she obeys the word of God, “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18). It continues until it finds completion when the Lord Jesus Christ returns, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). Biblical Sanctification therefore has an Initial, Progressive, and Final (Ultimate) stage to it. Ultimate Sanctification brings Progressive Sanctification to an end. This can only be achieved when the believer is brought into the eternal state at death or at the Return of Christ.

It is the responsibility of every Christian to deal with the fact that sin often rears its head, and take the appropriate action. Thus he sanctifies himself more and more so that the very likeness of Christ can be seen in him. This includes the fact that he has to separate himself unto God and away from the world in thought, word and deed. Some call this Positive Sanctification - the consecrating of oneself to God. Such a work will continue throughout the rest of his life. Biblical Sanctification depends upon the degree of commitment one gives to the Lord. If he actively walks in holiness then he will be declared holy by the Lord. Therefore sanctification takes commitment and discipline on the part of the one desiring to be cleansed.

We finish our study on the topic of Biblical Sanctification with a quote from James Smith (Daily Bible Readings), “The sanctification of the Spirit commences in regeneration, it is carried on through life, and will be complete in the day of Christ. It consists in making us holy, or inwardly and outwardly conforming us to the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ. It separates us from the world, sets our hearts against sin, consecrates us to the Lord’s service, makes us zealous for His glory, and creates us anew in Christ. Physically we are the same as before, but morally and spiritually we differ. The more we experience the

sanctifying work of the Spirit, the more clearly we shall discover our own sinfulness, the more we shall see the need for the Saviour's blood, the more we shall bless God for the Redeemer's finished work on Calvary, and the more carefully and cautiously we shall walk in our pilgrimage journey in this ungodly world. Nothing will prove our election by the Father, or our redemption by the Son, but the sanctification of the Holy Spirit."

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